

Proposed Limestone West Timber Sale

Scoping Notice

Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
Central Land Office
Bozeman Unit



March 1, 2016

Dear Bozeman Area Resident,

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Trust Land Management Division (TLMD), Bozeman Unit, is currently evaluating State trust lands within the Limestone /Nichols Creek area southeast of Bozeman, Montana for potential timber harvest activities. Specifically, DNRC TLMD is considering harvest activities in an area encompassing up to 2,725 acres within sections 3, 4, 9 and 10, Township 3 South, Range 6 East, and section 34, Township 2 South, Range 6 East (*see Proposed Project Area map*).

Currently sizeable areas of the lodgepole pine trees within the proposed harvest area have experienced serious infestations of Mountain Pine Beetle in the past years resulting in significant rates of mortality in the mature age classes. The Douglas-fir stands within the area are confronted with health and vigor issues due to the overstocked conditions and would benefit from selective harvesting practices.

We recognize that this is an important area to our neighbors and many community members throughout Bozeman and its surroundings. We want to provide you with every opportunity to ask us questions about the proposed project, provide input, share your concerns, and stay updated on and involved in each step of the process. Please read on to learn more about this proposed project.

What are State trust lands?

Upon ratification of the Montana State Constitution in 1889, the U.S. Congress granted certain lands to the State of Montana for support of common schools and other public institutions. To this day, these lands are held in trust for the specific trust beneficiaries to which they were assigned and ultimately for the people of the State of Montana (1972 Montana Constitution, [THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF MONTANA](#)). The Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) and the DNRC TLMD are required by law to manage these State trust lands to produce reasonable and legitimate return for the trust beneficiary institutions while considering environmental factors and protecting the future income-generating capacity of the land (1972 Montana, Article X; Montana Code Annotated, [MCA 77-1-202](#)).

State trust lands within the proposed project area are currently held in trust for the benefit of the Public Buildings and School of Mines (*see Proposed Project Area map*).

What are DNRC's objectives with this proposed project?

DNRC's mission is to manage the State forest resource for its health and long term sustainability and to protect and enhance the future income-generating capacity of the of the Trust land. The State Forest Land Management Plan (SFLMP) and State Forest Land Management Rules ([SFLMR](#)) are the rules under which DNRC manages forested State trust lands. The SFLMP is premised on the philosophy that the best way to produce long-term income for the trust is to manage intensively for healthy and biologically diverse forests. In the foreseeable future, timber management will continue to be the primary source of revenue and primary tool for achieving biodiversity objectives on forested state trust lands.

DNRC TLMD is proposing the following objectives for this proposed project:

1. Manage the forest resource to promote improved health, productivity, and diversity.
2. Generate revenue for the trust beneficiaries.
3. Capture the value of dead and dying lodgepole pine.
4. Minimize fire and safety risks imposed by these conditions.
5. Enhance and expand the existing transportation system to provide improved access for long-term future management of the area and fire suppression needs.

What activities would be involved with the proposed project?

In order to achieve these project objectives, we anticipate conducting the following activities:

- Road improvement
- Road building
- Timber harvest

How can I participate?

We are currently in the beginning stages of project development and would like your help in identifying potential issues associated with our proposed activities. Although we encourage you to submit comments *any time* during the MEPA process, we are asking the public to contact us with initial issues and concerns by **April 10, 2016**. Identifying issues early on in project development will help us develop alternatives under which we can reasonably address concerns through proper project design.

Please send comments:

Via Mail:

Chuck Barone, Project Leader
ATTN: LIMESTONE WEST
PROPOSED TIMBER SALE
Montana DNRC
2273 Boot Hill Court, Ste. 110
Bozeman, MT 59715

Via Email: [limestonewest@mt.gov]

Or Submit Comments Online at: [<http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/trust/forest-management/limestone-west/submit-comments>].

For more information on the proposed Limestone West Timber Sale Project, please visit our project website at [<http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/trust/forest-management/limestone-west>]. If you have other questions regarding the MEPA process, contact Craig Campbell or Chuck Barone at the Bozeman Unit Office at 586-5243.

Sincerely,

Chuck Barone

Chuck Barone
Bozeman Unit Forester